

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5556

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Law & Justice, February 21, 2013

Title: An act relating to missing endangered persons.

Brief Description: Concerning missing endangered persons.

Sponsors: Senators Darneille, Dammeier, Schlicher, Conway, Roach, McAuliffe, Becker, Carrell, Delvin and Shin.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Law & Justice: 2/15/13, 2/21/13 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5556 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Padden, Chair; Carrell, Vice Chair; Kline, Ranking Member; Darneille, Kohl-Welles, Pearson and Roach.

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

Background: The Endangered Missing Person Advisory (EMPA) program was developed and implemented in 2010. Its purpose is to enhance the public's ability to assist in recovering endangered missing persons who do not qualify for inclusion in an Amber Alert. The Amber Alert plan was originally designed to collect information about missing children. EMPA is initiated by law enforcement when the Amber Alert criteria are not met and a person is missing under unexplained or suspicious circumstances; the person is believed to be in danger; the incident was reported to law enforcement; and there is enough descriptive information available to assist in the person's recovery.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): Missing endangered person is defined as a person believed to be in danger because of age, health, mental or physical disability, a combination of environmental or weather conditions, or is believed to be unable to return safely without assistance. The Missing Children Clearinghouse is renamed the Missing Children and Endangered Person Clearinghouse. The EMPA plan is created and maintained by the Washington State Patrol (WSP). Social media may be used to enhance the public's ability to assist in recovering abducted children or missing endangered persons. Law

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enforcement agencies must file the missing person report into the state missing person computerized network within six hours instead of within 12 hours.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY LAW & JUSTICE COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): WSP must maintain the toll-free telephone hotline, but the reference to 24-hour availability is removed. The Amber Alert Plan and the EMPA Plans are separately named.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: PRO: This bill passed the Senate last year and this year, and the current technical amendment will make it even better. Not enough people know about this system, so it is severely underutilized. The system need more visibility. We need this bill to prevent a repeat of past tragedies. The present system is not working well and the delays in using the system are not helping.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Darneille, prime sponsor; Mark Allen, WA State Assn. of Broadcasters; Diana Stradden, The Arc of WA State; Cecil Daily, citizen.